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THE HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR.

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A radio talk by Mrs. Rowena Schmidt Carpenter, Bureau of Home Economics,
delivered through WRC and 40 other radio stations associated with the National
Broadcasting Company, Thursday, April 9, 1931.

How do you do, Homemakers!

I hope you didn't dye so many eggs for the children at Easter that I can't interest you in thinking about eggs today, because I'm about to suggest lots of good ways to prepare them. Our Bureau Leaflet 39 called "Eggs At Any Meal" says, you know, that probably no other single article of food can be used in a greater number of dishes. That would really be true if eggs were featured only as the main dish at breakfast, but most of us find, if we stop to think about it, that eggs come to the table almost every meal -- that is, at least a small quantity of egg in the salad dressing, the muffins, or the dessert.

But let's consider breakfast eggs first. The old stand-bys, so quickly prepared and universally satisfactory are eggs cooked in the shell, either hard or soft, and poached and fried eggs. But there's an art in cooking an egg by any method, and the secret of success is slow cooking at moderate, even heat. The aim is tender texture, no matter how firm. It has seemed to me sometimes when I have ordered eggs when away from home that chefs understand a hard egg to mean a tough one, something of the texture of vulcanized rubber. We can hardly blame any cook, including ourselves, for turning out a tough product if someone asks for a "hard boiled egg." "Hard boiling" even the best of eggs makes them tough, and so does "soft boiling," as a matter of fact. We just don't let ourselves use those terms any more in the Bureau. We speak of "soft cooked" and "hard cooked" eggs when describing eggs cooked in the shell either to a soft jellylike or to a firm consistency. To make them so, that is, to prevent toughening, we place them in cold water, on a rack, heat the water gradually to the simmering point, and never letting it boil during the cooking. Hard cooked eggs take 30 minutes of simmering.

Moderate temperature and slow cooking make better fried eggs too, whether you want them cooked soft or well done. So many times eggs are put into sizzling hot fat and fried vigorously, so that they are tough and almost burned on the bottom, and develop a tough brown frill around the edges, after the manner of a Queen Anne Ruching. Many people like the flavor of crisp browned egg white, which is not tough and can be obtained by cooking slowly in fat not too hot.

Luncheon or supper dishes of eggs in combination with tomatoes, cheese, or ham, are old favorites in many families. A very simple dish, full of flavor and color, is scrambled eggs made with canned tomatoes, or fresh ripe tomatoes in season. The tomatoes are stirred carefully into the partially cooked, scrambled eggs, and the mixture seasoned to taste. A few sprigs of parsley make an attractive garnish for a platter of eggs scrambled with tomatoes. Eggs Benedict, Curried Eggs, Cheese Souffle and the various kinds of omelets, are dressier luncheon dishes when there is more time for their preparation.

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Egg desserts offer almost endless possibilities for variety in the menu. There are the fruit whips, and baked and soft custards, each with many variations; and chocolate souffle, to delight the children and the whole family as well. I shan't try to tell you just how to make these things because the recipes are in the egg leaflet which you may have for the asking.

Omelets, souffles, and fruit whips are all puffy mixtures which depend upon stiffly beaten egg whites for their light texture. It is the air, you know, that you beat into the egg white, which expands when heated and gives the characteristic texture to these dishes. The tiny air cells formed in the beating process, and each coated with a bit of the egg protein, are very fragile. That is why we always fold in beaten egg whites carefully, instead of stirring it in briskly. We want to keep as many of those tiny air cells whole as we possibly can. And we control the baking carefully, too, using either a slow or a moderate oven depending upon the mixture, so that the egg will not cook firm until each little air cell has expanded to its full limit. There must be enough heat, of course, to actually cook the egg after the mixture has come up to its full height, or it will soon collapse. So many excellent cooks seem to have trouble making good omelets, souffles, and whips just because they don't understand the importance of handling beaten egg whites carefully to protect the delicate air cells they contain, or of baking fluffy egg mixtures slowly but thoroughly, so they expand and then cook through.

If you have this difficulty or if you are just interested in different ways of cooking eggs let us send you U. S. Department of Agriculture Leaflet No. 39-L, "Eggs At Any Meal." And now Goodbye, Homemakers, until next week!